

from the abyss of Time. Caucasus grew
crowded. Alone
on his desolate height brooded the ineffable
scorn and
ennui of Chateaubriand: 'Je voudrais
n'etre pas ne ou
etre & jamais oublie.... Je regarde passer a
mes pieds ma
derniere heure/ And after him, in Byron's
footsteps,
Alfred de Vigny in his turn cried his silence
to the silent
heavens and the silent earth:

Les grands pays muets longuement s'endront
Le juste opposera le dedain a Tabsence,
Et ne repondra plus que par ua froid silence
Au silence eternel de la Divinite*.

Seul le silence est grand, tout le reste est
faiblesse.

There is, indeed, always a slightly false
ring about a
taciturnity that cries out to be heard; and
yet those who
are not too English may grant a
magnificence of its own
to such rhetoric. The English, unfortunately,
can seldom
appreciate rhetoric of any kind, and so
remain permanently astonished at the continental
reputation of a Byron.
They think it is because they are too honest.
Foreigners
might say it was because they were too
hypocritical
Both may be right. In any case, we, too,
have had our
romantic cult (now grown rather a jest)
of strong, silent
men', though we prefer that they should
leave their silence
for others to remark upon. And even today
the silence
which commemorates the Armistice in
England conforms
to that ideal—a fine conception in so far as it
springs from
a hatred of windy eloquence above graves
too deep for
words; though slightly detestable also to
some who sense

in it a touch of that hypocritical
complacency of ours,
which is glad to substitute a ceremony for
any real thought
of the horror of the thing and of the menace
of its return.
And some, too, not the least truly English
for that, resent
even the momentary interference that this
silence imposes
on the freedom of the individual. Still, of
all the war